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Securing Our Nation's Seaports

Moving ahead with his comprehensive campaign to make our ports safer and more secure, Secretary Tom Ridge announced on June 21st the implementation of new international port security standards – in advance of the July 1st deadline established by the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA). In accordance with these standards, the Department of Homeland Security has hardened physical infrastructure, established procedures to verify the security of vessels before they approach U.S. ports, and better restrict access to port facilities.

The layered approach outlined yesterday at the Ports of Los Angeles/Long Beach ensures that security measures begin to take effect even before cargo is loaded onto a ship in a foreign port destined for the United States. Drawing from the resources of the Coast Guard and the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Directorate, the new international standards protect cargo at three critical phases: overseas, in transit, and at U.S. destinations.

Specific security measures that have been implemented in accordance with MTSA include:

- ✓ Increased identification checks on crew members and visitors
- ✓ Additional canine detection teams
- ✓ Expanded baggage and passenger screening
- ✓ X-ray machines on all large cruise ships.

The Committee notes that the Department has moved quickly on these critical port security improvements – exceeding even its own ambitious deadline. By implementing a multi-tiered approach in conjunction with the Coast Guard and CBP, the Department is utilizing its extensive resources to address this essential homeland security priority.

Additional Port Security Facts (source: DHS):

- ✓ Over 95% of the nation's cargo imports and exports moves through our ports
- ✓ There are 76 million recreational boaters in the United States and they spent over \$30.3 billion on boats and accessories in 2003.
- ✓ Worldwide, 5.8 billion tons of goods were traded by sea in 2001. This accounts for over 80 percent of world trade by volume.
- ✓ Over 318 billion gallons of petroleum products are shipped in vessels on U.S. waterways in a year.
- ✓ Cruise Ships calling at U.S. ports carry over 6 million passengers per year.